

## Explanations

**Don't have to and must not**

- *Don't have to* refers to an absence of obligation.  
*You **don't have to** work tomorrow.*
- *Must not* refers to an obligation not to do something.  
*You **must not** leave the room before the end of the test.*

**Should**

Where *\*should* appears, *ought to* can also be used.

- Expectation  
*This film **\*should** be really good.*
- Recommendation  
*I think you **\*should** talk it over with your parents.*  
In writing, *should* can be used to express a strong obligation politely.  
*Guests **should** vacate their rooms by midday.*
- Criticism of an action  
*You **\*shouldn't** eat so much late at night.*
- Uncertainty  
***Should** I leave these papers on your desk?*
- *Should* and verbs of thinking  
*Should* is often used with verbs of thinking, to make an opinion less direct.  
*I **should think** that model would sell quite well.*
- With *be* and adjectives describing chance  
This group of adjectives includes *odd*, *strange*, *funny (=odd)* and the expression *What a coincidence*.  
*It's strange that you **should** be staying in the same hotel!*
- After *in case* to emphasise unlikelihood  
*I'm taking an umbrella **in case it should** rain.*  
See Grammar 8 for similar uses in conditional sentences.
- *Could* is used to express possibility or uncertainty.  
*This **could** be the house.*
- *Could* is used with comparative adjectives to express possibility or impossibility.  
*The situation **couldn't** be worse.*  
*It **could** be better.*

**Could**

- *Could* is used to make suggestions.  
*We **could** go to that new restaurant opposite the cinema.*

- *Could* is used to express unwillingness.  
*I **couldn't** possibly leave Tim here on his own.*

## Can

- *Can* with *be* is used to make criticisms.  
*You **can be** really annoying, you know!*
- *Can* is also used with *be* to refer to capability.  
*Winter here **can be** really cold.*

## Must and can't

These refer to present time only. (See *bound to*). In expressing certainty, they are opposites.

*This **must** be our stop. (I'm sure it is.)*  
*This **can't** be our stop. (I'm sure it isn't.)*

## May and might

- *May* can be used to express *although* clauses:  
*She **may** be the boss, **but** that is no excuse for shouting like that.*  
See also Grammar 14 Emphasis.
- *May/might as well*  
This describes the only thing left to do, something which the speaker is not enthusiastic about.  
*Nobody else is going to turn up now for the lesson, so you **may as well** go home.*
- *May* and *might* both express possibility or uncertainty. *May* is more common in formal language.  
*The peace conference **may** find a solution to the problem.*
- There is an idiomatic expression with *try*, using *may* for present reference, and *might* for past reference.  
***Try as I might**, I could not pass my driving test.*  
(This means although I tried hard, I could not pass my driving test.)

## Shall

- *Shall* can be used with all persons to emphasise something which the speaker feels is certain to happen or wants to happen.  
*I **shall** definitely give up smoking this year.*  
*We **shall** win! (*shall* is stressed in this sentence)*
- Similarly, *shall* is used in formal rules and regulations.  
*No player **shall** knowingly pick up or move the ball of another player.*

## Will

- *Will* can be used to express an assumption.  
*A: The phone's ringing. B: That'**ll** be for me.*

- *Will/won't* can be used emphatically to tell someone of the speaker's intention, or to forbid an action, in response to a *will* expression.

*I'll take the money anyway, so there!*

*You **won't**!*

*I **will**!*

Similarly *I won't* can mean *I refuse*, and *I will* can mean *I insist*.

*A: I **won't** do it! B: Yes, you **will**!*

## Would

*Would* is often used in situations where a conditional sense is understood but not stated.

*Nobody **would** agree with that idea.* (if we asked them)

*Life **wouldn't** be worth living without you.* (if you weren't there)

*I think Jim **would** be the best candidate.* (if he was under consideration for the job)

*Sue **wouldn't** do that, surely!* (if you think she's capable of doing that).

## Need

- *Need to* is a modal auxiliary, and behaves like a normal verb.

*Do you **need to** use the photocopier?*

- *Need* is a modal auxiliary, but mainly in question and negative forms.

***Need** you make so much noise?*

See Grammar 7 for *need doing*

## Related non-modal expressions

- *Had better*

This is a recommendation and refers only to the present or future.

*You'd **better** not phone her again.*

- *Be bound to*

This makes a future prediction of certainty.

*It's **bound to rain** tomorrow.*